



THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

September 23, 2012

Sermon Text: Matthew 6:9-13

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

{PRAYER:}

Heavenly Father, we pray that you would open our hearts to hear your Holy Word, that through faith in Christ Jesus, we might lead a sanctified life and serve only you in word and deed. To this end we ask your blessing on our meditation this morning. Amen.

Dear Children of God,

Last Sunday we continued our study of the Lord's Prayer, turning our attention to the second, third and fourth petitions.

Thus far we have learned from Jesus' prayer instruction how we are not to pray, that we may, without fear, address our prayers to our heavenly Father; who for Christ sake has promised to hear our prayers and indeed knows everything we need even before we ask for it. We also learned last Sunday the temporal or physical blessings for which God wants us to pray.

Today we want to focus our attention on the fifth, sixth, and seventh petitions as well as the doxology of the Lord's Prayer.

It is in Jesus' instruction of these next three petitions of the Lord's Prayer that we will learn

1. For what spiritual blessings we are to pray,
2. Why we are to pray for them, and
3. To whom we are to give honor and glory for all.

We read Jesus' words in verses 12-13:

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

In the Fifth petition, we pray: *"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."*

Here we are, first of all, with all humility acknowledging that we have sinned against God and therefore, do indeed, have a great debt before God our King.

Furthermore, we are here confessing to God that our sins are debts of unbelievable scope and severity.

These are debts which we daily incur because of our many sins; those of which we are conscious (both sins of commission and omission) and those sins committed in ignorance known in scripture as 'secret faults' as well.

And each sin we commit adds to the daily ledger of enormous sin-debt we owe.

Most of us have probably known, at one time or another, what a horrible, gnawing feeling it is to have a financial debt that we have no idea how we are going to pay on time due to circumstances beyond our control, whether its due to job loss or illness or something else. And even more so, a debt we don't know how we are going to repay at all.

Well, the spiritual debt we owe on account of our sins, is so severe and so overwhelmingly enormous, we can never, ever even hope to balance the books before God of our own accord. We are completely lacking in what is demanded of us for payment of the debt we owe. *And* we are without excuse.

We are aware of this horrible fact because of the Law of God is to be found, not only in Scripture, but also written in our hearts. And so, our own consciences, convict us and drive us to fear the wrath and righteous condemnation of the Almighty God. And rightfully so, because all human beings *have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)

We are completely incapable of paying the debt, because none of us – no, not even the richest most seemingly righteous person in the whole world – can merit anything by who we are. Neither by what riches we have on this earth, nor by the noble good civic works we do in this life can we earn God's favor. Absolutely nothing *in us, or of us,* can bring us into the good graces of a Jealous and Angry God.

Isaiah 64:6 says *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."*

And Ecclesiastes 7:20 states: *"There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not."*

And because we merit nothing – because we have absolutely no hope of there being anything in, or of, our own selves that can possibly pay the debt of sin each and everyone of us have against us – we all stand equally condemned before God, by the Law of God. So that no one can redeem himself or anyone else.

We have each of us been sentenced and stand condemned to spiritual death and eternal punishment in the unquenchable fires of Hell!

As we read in Ezekiel 18:20 *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."* And in Romans 6:23 *"The wages of sin is death."*

So, where can we find rescue, true peace and sure salvation, from this sentence of spiritual death and eternal punishment which has been pronounced on us by the condemning of the Law of God?

We find true salvation from the condemnation of God's Law ONLY at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ – *Only in the Gospel.*

We read in Galatians 3:13 *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."*

And in I Peter 1:18,19 *"Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

Now we know from the Gospel, the good news of the Grace of God to all who believe, that we have been freely forgiven our debt of sin, have eternal life and are adopted children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. But we know too, that because of the constant presence and persistence of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh are always seeking to distract us and keep us from the cross of Christ – we know we ALL daily sin much, and that none of us will ever attain such a position of sanctification here in this earthly plain that we will not need such daily forgiveness.

And so it is with this in mind that we call upon God in the Fifth Petition asking our heavenly Father to "forgive us our debts".

And this, not as though He does not forgive sin without and even before our prayer (for that He *HAS* done in the all-sufficient suffering and death of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ). But God desires we ask this so that *WE* might be instructed and reminded of our daily need for His forgiveness and accept this free gift with the open hand of faith each new day of our lives, so that daily our souls are comforted and our consciences may be at peace.

Jesus further instructs us that we should pray that God forgive us our debts '*as we forgive our debtors.*'

Here we see that God, for Christ's sake, promises to forgive us all our sins as we forgive our neighbor's sin against us. For just as we daily sin much, and must daily repent and ask forgiveness of God and do freely receive it through the grace of God in Christ Jesus alone; so too, we ought to readily and willingly forgive those who sin against us.

If we are not willing to forgive anyone who has sinned against us, we cannot, according to God's Word, think that we have God's forgiveness. For in such a case, don't we actually remain impenitent of our own sins before God by holding on to our own sin of malice and anger, perhaps even retaining a sinful desire to wreak revenge upon the one who we believe has so spitefully abused us? In such a case, though we may well deceive ourselves to the contrary, we are in unbelief, and it is unbelief that damns.

But if we are truly of a forgiving heart towards all that sin against us, we have the additional blessed assurance that our Father will forgive our sins. This assurance is ours, *NOT* as though we deserve forgiveness on account of our forgiving the sins of others. (For again we merit nothing in, or of, ourselves.) But God gives to us this word of comfort and assurance in order it should serve us

as a sign to us of His confirmation alongside of the promise which Christ repeats immediately after the Lord's prayer: "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" (Matthew 6:14).

Now, again, while we have the blessed assurance that in Christ we have received the forgiveness of our sins; we also know that because we are Children of God we will always be confronted by the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh so long as we live on this earth.

And so our Lord Jesus next instructs us with the words of the sixth and seventh petitions, verse 13: "*And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.*"

At first reading one might think that because we here are praying that God would not lead us into temptation, that God must therefore tempt man to do evil – to sin.

This is certainly not the case.

For as we read in James 1:13,14 "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.*"

No, the use of the word "temptation" in the case where God is said to 'tempt' man has as its definition "*a testing or trying of the faith*" of God's children in order that they might be purified and truly strengthened in their life and faith.

We see this in the story of the feeding of the 5000, as recorded in John 6:5-6:
[Jesus] "*...saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? And this He said to prove him; for He Himself knew what He would do.*"

And so, Our Lord indeed sometimes will allow us to be confronted, or tested by what the average person feels is an impossible situation without a possible solution – we might feel as though life isn't at all fair, especially when we believe someone has wronged us.

It is during times like these that our faith is purified, just as gold is purified by fire. It is perseverance in God's Word through these times whereby God the Holy Spirit causes our faith to be strengthened much as a muscle of the body is strengthened by exercise, which at first tears down the muscle, but in the end results in a stronger muscle and a stronger body.

To this end He may allow to have removed from us what has become – or is in danger of becoming – the basis for our feeling of security and a lack of trust in Him alone. Whether it is our source of income, our financial savings or investments, other material goods, our personal relationships, or perhaps even our health, God may allow these blessings to be withdrawn from us in order to bring us to repentance and to prove our faith – to bring us to the point where we will once again seek *His kingdom* first, and place all our trust *in God*, rather than in those feelings, those material things we have, or what we think we can accomplish in and of ourselves.

Sometimes as God's dear children we may well need to be brought back to the full realization that our Father God is the Almighty God, that He is the *ONLY* sure thing in this life; and that money, goods, reputation, personal relationships and good health are all blessings from our Him, for which we ought to be thankful, content, and uncomplaining.

Dear Friends, you can have this godly attitude because you know of His own sacrifice for your sins and His eternal promise that He loves you and knows about everything you need and what is best for you before you even ask for it.

What a comfort this is to all those who believe, yes?

In this, the sixth petition then, the word "temptation" has as its definition: "to tempt to evil." Since we have just read from Scripture that God does *not* tempt man to evil, what we are praying in this petition is that God would guard and keep us in the faith. That is, that He might strengthen us, and be an ever Present Help, so that we are not deceived nor seduced to despair of God's grace – so that we are not led to unbelief, or into some other great shame or vice by the constant assaults and trickery of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh.

This God accomplishes in us through the proper application of the *Means of Grace* – the faithful preaching and hearing of *His Word*, and the proper use of the *Sacraments of Holy Baptism and The Lord's Supper*.

Lastly, as the sum of all our petitions, we ask in the seventh petition, that God would *deliver us from evil*.

We here ask that God would keep every evil from us, that He would strengthen and preserve us through the power of His Word when He does allow temptation to come, and that the outcome of the temptations we face are turned to our benefit.

We also pray in the seventh petition that God will ultimately deliver us from ALL evil by a peaceful and blessed passing from this veil of tears – this sinful earth and this sinful flesh – into the everlasting glory of Christ's Heavenly Kingdom.

For God is indeed, our Heavenly King. He is the Almighty Creator, the Lord of the universe; there is none other like unto Him.

He is our dear heavenly Father who has our very best interest at heart. He can, and does, provide all we need and more in abundance, to keep our bodies in this life.

He is the Savior of the world, and He is the preserver of our faith, freely giving us all manner of spiritual blessings to keep our souls, till we are brought into the mansions that He has prepared for us in heaven.

As He alone is All in All, He is most worthy of all the honor, glory, praise and thanksgiving our human hearts and all of creation can muster.

So let us praise His name forever!

And so we are instructed to rightly close the Lord's Prayer with the following words of the doxology or conclusion: *"For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

Dear Friends, Let us now pray the Lord's Prayer; as Jesus, our Lord and Savior, taught us to pray:

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

And now may the Peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.